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AUTHOR Albert, Elaine
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ABSTRACT

Intended to help children learn phonics and to learn how to use phonics, this handbook is modeled on the 15th century hornbook. The handbook is divided into three parts: (1) "What Went Wrong?"; (2) "HOW to Teach Someone to Read by Beginning with Basic Phonics"; and (3) "Special Problems." Nineteen references and a hornbook for the 20th century are appended. (MS)

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HOW

A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING SOMEONE TO READ

SYSTEMATIC BASIC PHONICS

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O
P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n .
p q r s t . v w x y/y z

a e i o u a e i o u

ab	eb	ib	ob	ub	‖	ba	be	bi	bo	bu
ac	ec	ic	oc	uc	‖	ca	*ce*	*ci*	co	cu
ad	ed	id	od	ud	‖	da	de	di	do	du

sh th ch wh ph qu -ng

er ir ur	ar or	ow ou	aw au	oo oo	oy oi	ti ci si

A HORNBOOK FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Based on the 15th Century Hornbook

CS009520

"Thanks ever so much for sending me the rewritten version of your 'HOW' booklet. I read it again with great pleasure. As you may imagine, I have quite a collection of these phonics readers by now, but yours has a very special place. So clear, so lucid, so simple. You have produced one of the most beautiful solutions to the problem."

--- Rudolf Flesch

"During this hour [with HOW materials] I have learned more about how to teach reading than in all my graduate courses put together."

-- in-service elementary teacher

"I was really impressed with your booklet, "HOW". It is so systematic. I can remember my language arts method course in college. Very little of it was of help in actually teaching children. We do not need to complicate learning. How beneficial it would have been to have had this little booklet as a new teacher!"

-- elementary school principal"

"A significant contribution to the field."

--Educational Resources Information Center ERIC

HOW

A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING SOMEONE TO READ
Based upon the 15th Century Hornbook

"Every useless aid arrests development"---Montessori

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Elaine Albert

RASPBERRY HILL

1929 N. Drake Road

Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007

(616) 343-2312

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CONTENTS

Introduction
15th Century Hornbook

PART I- What Went Wrong?
How to Prevent a Child from Discovering Phonics for Himself
Lost Secrets of Learning to Read
WHY? The Grandmothers' Questions

PART II- HOW to teach Someone to Read by Beginning with Basic Phonics

The alphabet
The short vowels
The syllabary
The digraphs
Blends? The fescue
Two vowels
Final silent "e"
The long vowel rule
Vowel combinations
Silent letters and other spooks

PART III - Special Problems.

Automaticity: the Abecedarian's special time
The Analphabetic: how to help the remedial reader
Samples: recordings from illiteracy
The Corpus Callosum: Time Runs out

Bibliography (with blacklist)

A Hornbook for the 20th Century

INTRODUCTION

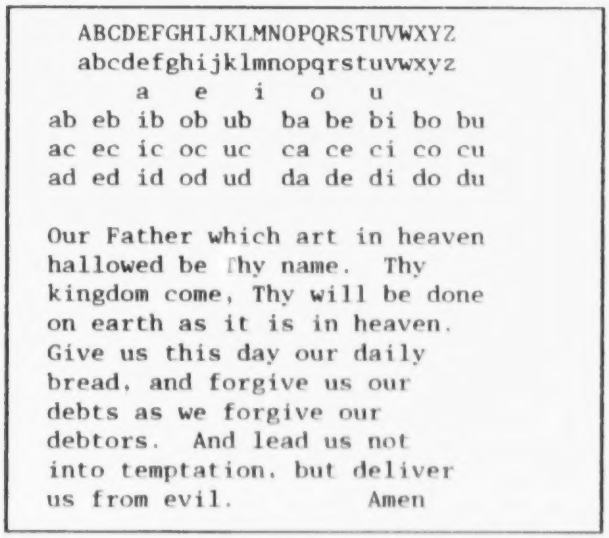
"I don't want to send my child to school`" said the worried mother. "I'm afraid she'll catch Dyslexia." Well no. "Dyslexia" is not contagious. But the youngster may very well run into difficulty by missing out on understanding how to use phonics as the beginning of learning to read.

Many teachers today have never seen a Phonics-First system for beginners. Most teachers today still use the basal series, providing activities that include talking about pictures, responding to flashcards, guessing at words in a story, and filling in pages of workbooks. Meanwhile, test scores remain low, and employers complain of illiteracy in job applicants.

Systematic phonics is considered old-fashioned. Yet research supports reading by phonics as the most successful method of teaching reading. (See the bibliography at the end of this HOW.) Our ancestors regularly taught their children how to read, at home, before school entry, and they all used phonics. "Look-say" only came into wide use after 1920.

After 50 years' worth of look-say, we now have a large percentage of parents who cannot read aloud to their own children, not to mention teaching them the phonics those parents never had. For parents who would like to teach their children to read, here's **HOW**, some simple steps to make sure that Johnny and Mary learn phonics, and how to use phonics, from the beginning. This program will also be useful to those who wish to help older children and adult illiterates, though that will usually take much longer.

Happily the Phonics-First outlined in **HOW** can be taught without special materials, simply by using the blackboard or paper and pencil. Our ancestors used a slate, remember? The program outlined in **HOW** matches the primers of McGuffey and others in use at the beginning of this century before "look-say" came into use. The program in HOW matches the old horn book from which Shakespeare and George Washington learned to read: first the alphabet, then the syllabary, then the inspection of a previously memorized passage to see the letters doing their work. The Phoenicians did it first.


ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
a e i o u
ab eb ib ob ub ba be bi bo bu
ac ec ic oc uc ca ce ci co cu
ad ed id od ud da de di do du
Our Father which art in heaven
hallowed be Thy name. Thy
kingdom come, Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily
bread, and forgive us our
debts as we forgive our
debtors. And lead us not
into temptation, but deliver
us from evil. Amen

This is the face of a hornbook. A single sheet of paper was fastened to a wooden paddle and covered with a protective sheet or varnish to guard it from finger marks. Paper was costly long ago.

For hundreds of years these little hornbooks taught people how to read. Shakespeare learned how to read by using a hornbook. So did Queen Elizabeth I. Hornbooks were part of the cargo in those tiny ships that brought the first settlers to America. Hornbooks traveled in the covered wagons that carried literacy to our western shores. Hornbooks disappeared only when paper became more affordable.

The face of a hornbook contained:

(1) Two alphabets (to show how the letters look), with vowels separated out;
(2) A syllabary (each syllable to be turned into a word by adding one more consonant and "sounding out");
(3) A familiar prayer, already memorized, to recite and "read" aloud, watching the letters do their work.

A great many people, for hundreds of years, learned how to read by using a hornbook.

WHAT WENT WRONG ?

How to Prevent a Child
from Discovering Basic Phonics for Himself

Why: A Grandmothers' Question

Lost Secrets of Learning to Read

How to Prevent a Child from Discovering Basic Phonics for Himself:

1. Train the child to look at each word as a chunk, a whole word at a time. Use flash cards.

2. Encourage guessing. Use pictures to interrupt the left-to-right sequence of the text.

3. Accept false readings such as "pony" for "horse; "dish" instead of "bowl", etc.

4. Do not let the child point to the letters, left-to-right. Have him sit on his hands to prevent pointing. Excuse reversals (was/saw; b/d) by calling these birth defects.

5. Conduct the class as silent reading. Oral reading exposes errors.

6. Reward speedy reading with flash cards and timed tests. Offer only brief selections for short attention.

7. Delay teaching the short vowel sounds till second or third grade on the grounds that these are too difficult.

8. Offer an early mix of words based, not on phonic principles, but on frequency-of-use. This will insure that there will be a higher-than-normal proportion of phonic irregularity, right at the start.

9. Do not let the child watch the page while you read aloud. Sit facing him as in a schoolroom, not side-by-side as with mother-and-child.

10. Give him first-reading books with simple-minded sentences where the "story" is told in the pictures. Hold back on fairy tales, animal stories, and nursery tales until he has outgrown them.

11. During this time, to prevent home interference, send home report cards telling parents that the child is doing just fine, is up-to-grade-level, etc. If parents complain about his not reading, explain that the schoool is using advanced knowledge about children's Readiness, that you are carefully protecting the child from being pushed. Warn parents not to interfere.

Some "gifted" children will discover phonics in spite of these precautions. Many others will need remedial classes and adult illiteracy programs, later.

Lost Secrets of Learning
How to Read

1. It can take longer to learn the letters of the alphabet than it takes to learn how to read. However, very little children delight to ask, "What's that?" and this can include the letters of the alphabet, first capitals, then small. Thus when school time comes, all the letters are old friends.

2. The short vowel sounds are best learned first, at the very beginning of reading lessons. Yes, this is one of the hardest parts of the job. It may take longer to learn these short vowels than it takes to learn all the rest of the phonics. A good reason for beginning with the short vowels is that 62% (that's almost two-thirds) of all English syllables contain the short vowel-- so that mastery of these permits the learner to figure out thousands of words right away. The short vowel sounds:

a - as in apple
e - as in elephant
i - as in igloo
o - as in ox
u - as in umbrella

3. The short vowels can be taught paired with single consonants, as in the syllabary on a hornbook--

ab eb ib ob ub ba be bi bo bu

This eliminates the problem called "grunting phonics" so that there is no "buh" grunt in trying to read "bat"
(not buh-at, duh-ig;but ba-t, di-g).

4. From the first the learner needs to observe that the **LETTERS** in the word are read from left-to-right. Thus, ab is not ba; the word "was" differs from "saw", from left-to-right. Activities which cause the learner's attention to jump about, as in looking back and forth between text and pictures, interrupt this left-to-right sequence and may produce "linear dyslexia,"-- i.e. failure of the habit of reading a line of words or letters from left-to-right.

5. The use of a **FESCUE** (originally a straw, as in broomstraw) will assist the beginner to bring his attention to the sequence of the letters that make up the word. Pointing with the finger is better than no pointing at all, but a finger is too fat, whereas a fescue points to a single letter, thus guiding the eye from left-to-right, letter by letter. There is reason to believe that the learner who is using his hand to guide his fescue is assisting his eye co-ordination.

6. Digraphs must be taught (sh, th, ch, ph, wh,-ng), for these represent sounds not included in our alphabet. It is not necessary, however, to teach "blends" (bl,tr,sm,scr, etc.) for with the fescue the learner can sound out each letter in its turn as he comes to it, left-to-right.

7. The old hornbook included the Lord's Prayer, to provide a text which the learner already knew by heart so that he could fescue his way through the text as he recited it out loud, watching the letters doing their work. Some previously memorized verses or other familiar text can give the learner confidence as he fescues his way through it. Users of the old hornbook graduated from that single sheet to reading the Bible, often because that was the only book available. For some beginners, reading the Bible offers a semi-familiar text for encouragement. In other cases the learner may practice his early reading on familiar nursery tales. These long-loved stories contain helpful repetition, but also genuine plot.

8. The learner needs to read aloud to a mentor who will hold the fescue at any point where an error occurs until that error is corrected. Having the learner read aloud can be a check for accuracy and provide opportunity for encouragement. Furthermore, the learner's intonations will throw light on his grasp of the meaning, serving as a testing device far beyond the possibilities in "workbooks."

9. One teacher, one child, one book--- this works best. This makes possible the use of the fescue while it eliminates competition, anxiety, and haste. One teacher we know found a way to fit this into her busy schedule. During the class's silent reading time, she walks quietly about the room, stopping now and again to tap a child on the head, whereupon the child reads aloud softly for the teacher. This involves no wasted time shuffling chairs, arranging groups, and permits the teacher advantages ordinarily reserved to a tutor.

10. Phonics is a brief subject. It comes to an end. Its goal is "automaticity", that is, application of phonic knowledge, rapidly, below the level of consciousness, for real reading. Montessori speaks of "sensitive periods" in child development. One of these periods seems to come at Age Seven. Seven-year-olds are often compulsive readers. They read anything and everything that comes handy, from cereal boxes to repeated readings of favorite classics. The child who has not mastered phonics early enough loses this natural period in which practicing his skill is what he is peculiarly ready to do, at Age Seven.

WHY?

When did today's illiteracy overtake us?
How Did This Happen to the Teaching of Reading?
These are the questions that the grandmothers ask. When the children early in this century went to school they all learned how to read, with phonics first. If a pupil did not learn how to read in first grade, he was held back to repeat the grade. Being able to read was a simple intelligence test in those days. Everybody above the level of feeble-minded could learn to read. Some of our Representatives in Washington also want to know what happened. Here's part of their answer:

OVERSIGHT ON ILLITERACY IN THE UNITED STATES:

Hearing before the Subcommittee on Elementary, Secondary, and Vocational Education of the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Representatives, held in Washington, D.C., March 20, 1986. Hon. Augustus F.Hawkins presiding; Senator Edward Zorinsky, guest moderator. Excerpts:

p. 3 "The majority of our schools are not using proven methods of teaching reading, as evidenced by the report of the Commission on Reading, Becoming a Nation of Readers. Ironically, almost all of the basal programs sold by the large publishers are more expensive and less effective than other methods which will be described here today... We must ask why they continue to use these types of ineffective methods. I believe this is a clear case of conflict-of-interest. In `The Great American Reading Machine,' Prof.David Yarington blames our reading ills on interlocking self-interests of national, State, and local education departments; publishers, particularly of basal readers; education professors; and unsuspecting teachers. Even with the publication of Becoming a Nation of Readers, schools are not jumping on the bandwagon to improve their methods of teaching reading. I believe this is because they still do not have sufficient information to choose the best ones."

-- Senator Zorinsky

p.6 "We still come back to the question, Why do educators bury this reading and literacy problem? The International Reading Association was founded in 1956, founded by a coalition of people deeply involved in the writing and publishing of whole- word reading materials. This association has, over the years, augmented its influence to where it is virtually the only game in town as far reading practices and pedagogy are concerned. It very largely influences what is taught in the teacher training institutions." --
Charles M. Richardson

p.10 "We're talking about preventing reading failure, using the old ounce of prevention principle. Let's engineer the system, train the regular first and second grade teachers to do it right the first time. The track record of remedial reading is its own condemnation. School systems that have switched to phonic-intensive methods not only are seeing higher scores, but reduced costs of materials.... **The turnaround will not happen unless those of us who understand the situation speak out."**

--Charles M. Richardson (engineer-tutor)

p.75 "All the evidence points to the fact that conditioned reflexes are established to the left angular gyrus [of the brain] for print read as sound [phonics], but to the right angular gyrus for print read as pictures or sight words [look-say]. Mixed dominance is very undesirable. To use Samuel Blumenfeld's terms, we are jamming the reflexes in children's brains."

--Geraldine E. Rogers

Elsewhere, Dr. Barabara Bateman of the University of Oregon has used some harsh words, calling the failure of the schools to use the phonics programs, which have taught all the children to read, as being either "negliigent or malicious".
Negligent? Malicious? These are strong words!

The primers exist. Some of the ones the Congressional Committee heard about, on that March 20 day, are listed here in the bibliography of this HOW. It is not a question of needing more money: teaching with basic phonics actually costs less! Superintendent Charles Micciche reported to that House Committee that when his schools in New Hampshire switched from look-say programs to phonics, the per-pupil costs dropped from $16 to less than $3 per child, even including some children's literature books; and that thereafter his schools made the best reading scores in the State.

WHY this nation-wide illiteracy problem? And how to fix it?
There is an answer that is both sad and yet offers hope: Do it at home. The tools are here, ancient tools of proven success. They do not cost money. Their price is in knowledge, patience, and will.

HOW

to teach someone to read
by begining with
SYSTEMATIC PHONICS

HOW.

The most important subject in a child's education is learning to read. The most important person in a child's education is the one who teaches him to read.

If you want to help someone learn to read, here's how. To teach a beginner is to start with a clean slate. To help someone who has already failed means to show him the things he missed somewhere along the line. For him the learning is much more difficult because that person is discouraged, has bad reading habits, and will need lots more patience and encouragement. But you can do it.

PART ONE: The Alphabet

Learning to read begins with the alphabet, starting with the capital letters (which are easier), then the lower case letters, which have some reversals. You can find letters everywhere--in newspaper headlines, on road signs, canned goods, children's blocks, ABC books, all around. In some ways, learning the letters can be the slowest part of the job. It can take a long time. However, little children like to ask, "What's that?" and can readily learn to recognize all the letters before they go to school. When the learner can name most of the capital letters, start on the lower case letters. If the learner gets mixed up between a "b" and a "d", show him what happens if you put the top bump on the letter: which one makes "B"?

It's good to learn the names of the letters, but it is far more helpful to learn the sound for each letter. As you name the letters out loud, you can hear that the name of each letter, except for two of them, will tell something about what **sound** that letter can make in a word. "H" and "W" don't: just tell the learner how they sound. Keep the sound as simple as possible: f-f-f m-m-m s-s-s b-b-b. Carefully avoid gruntings such as buh, kuh, tuh: the extra grunts are not helpful when it comes to reading words.

This HOW is not a workbook, not a primer. It is a manual for a tutor. It assumes that there is plenty of paper and pencil ready at hand. Our ancestors used a slate, remember?

PART TWO: The Five Short Vowels

Show the learner the 5 letters called "vowels". These are a...e...i...o...u. Explain that each of these vowels has two possible sounds: "long" and "short". The "long" vowel sounds the way the name of the letter sounds. We will start with the "short" vowels. These are heard in:

a --apple
e --elephant
i --igloo
o --ox
u --umbrella

Learning the Sounds of these five short vowels is the hardest part of the whole job. Nevertheless, this is the best place to start, and here's why: almost two-thirds of all the syllables in English use the short vowels. That means that when the learner has mastered these, he can read lots of words-- hundreds and hundreds of words. Here's how:

PART THREE: The Syllables

Make some pairs of letters, one vowel, then one consonant, and say them out loud, like this:

ab...eb...ib...ob...ub at...et...it...ot...ut
ax...ex...ix...ox...ux am...em...im...om...um

(All the letters that are not vowels are consonants.) And if the learner happens to notice that you might use some of these to get "rat" or "box" or "mud"----Cheers! Next reverse your pairs of vowel and consonant, being sure that you use only **SHORT** vowels as you say them out loud, to get some like this:

ba... be... bi... bo... bu

CAREFUL! That's not the word "be", just a piece of a word. It uses the short vowel and could turn into "bed" or "bet" or "beg". More pairs with short vowels:

sa...se...si...so.(sox)...su pa...pe...pi...po...pu
ma...me "(as in "met", not the word "me")" mi...mo.(mop)...mu

Point out to the learner that the letters are always sounded from left-to-right, so that "ab" and "ba" are not the same. Just as we Write the letters from left-to-right, so we have to Read the letters from left-to-right. Surprisingly, a person who has failed in reading may not have noticed this. Tell him. Better yet, guide his eye with a small pointer, like a fescue (straw), one letter at a time, left-to-right.

Now make some sandwich words, starting with one consonant, then one short vowel, then one more consonant. You can make hundreds of them! The learner can make some too.

map tub fox pen jet zip

sox rub dig log sap

On and on. You can use paper and pencil, a blackboard, some Scrabble letters, children's ABC blocks; you can even make words with your finger in the wet sand on the beach or in some flour spread out on a cookie pan. Encourage the learner to play with these sandwich words. You can even make some dumb sentences:

Cat bit rat. Rat ran. Tom hit Gus. Gus is mad.

Spelling does not help. Consider the hurdle of shifting from "aitch-aye-tee" to "hat" or "double-you-eye-jee" to "wig". Don't name the letters for now. Just use the Sounds.

After a while try the learner on some long words, all with short vowels. Take the word letter-by-letter, left-to-right, slowly at first, then speeded up till the learner hears the word:

hippopotamus octopus benefit electric difficult
political level fantastic president

There is good reason to take lots of practice at this point first: because these short vowels are difficult and secondly: because the short vowels are used in so large a portion of all we read.

To make some more interesting sentences, it helps to show the learner two words that do not behave as expected: the words "a" and "the":

Ed had a bat. **The cat fed a kit.**
The big bag had a bug in it. **The bandit ran at the cop.**
The cop hit the bandit. **The cop had a camera.**

"Sound it out, dear," said Grandma.
And use a pointer.

EXERCISE: The Short Vowels

Add one consonant to make a word. Then read your results out loud.

pan	nu	ra	ho	bi	ge	sa	bu	te	po
ja	fi	ne	mu	ma	co	ha	bi	gu	fa
la	ta	ti	to	te	ni	ri	cu	va	je
zi	su	re	ye	me	ra	si	ba	ne	mo

The short "e" is the most difficult for most learners to hear and say just right:

elephant exercise expect excellent engine effort

Now the learner can discover that he can make-- and read-- dozens of these simple sandwich words! And not all of them "primer words" either: jet, zip, gum, cop, hep, bug, pop, dig, rap, keg, gag, sap, nut, bum, zig-zag..... The learner can enjoy a lot of success, right here.

At this point you can even make some dumb sentences:

Rat has a hat.
Nan bit Sam.
Fat Dan can pat a big pig.
Tim can tag Sis.
Meg got a pin.
Can Meg jab Liz?
The dog got in the mud.
Did the dog get wet? Yes.
The dog sat on the map.
End of the map.

What can you make? Sure they're stupid. But you can make dozens of these little dumb sentences.

Remember:
At This Point we are not concerned about gaining wisdom from a book.
First comes practice with the alphabetic code.
Literature must wait a bit."

For a pleasant end to these first sessions, a bit of poetry goes well. If it is something the learner has already memorized, he can recite it as he points to the letters:

Jack and Jill went up a hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after.

There are words here of course that are not explainable by what the learner knows so far. No matter. He knows the piece by heart and can see how at least some of it works.

On the old hornbook, the Lord's Prayer was used for this first reading-- a text already known by heart. Our ancestors next used the Bible as their first reading book. It was often the only book in the house. Furthermore, it had this advantage: some passages, were already familiar, some even memorized, to help the beginning reader along.

If there seems to be nothing the learner already knows by heart, select a short bit of verse and read it aloud to him-- while pointing, letter by letter-- over and over till he almost knows it by heart and can follow the text as you read it together. Stevenson's:

The rain is raining all around.
It falls on field and tree.
It rains on the umbrellas here
And on the ships at sea.

Use whatever you have! Poetry, songs, nursery rhymes, Mother Goose, jingles, ads... Let it be play, moving lightly along. Do not worry about rules or exceptions: you are "reading" something you already know by heart!

Goof Offs (also can be called "sight words")
Some words goof off. The sensible way to spell "does" would be "duz". Here are a few more that goof off. (It's fun to write some of them as if they were sensible!)
was "wuz" what "wot" one "wun" you to two
It is possible to write more sentences if you can use just a few of these goofy words.

PART FOUR: The Digraphs

There are not enough letters in our alphabet for all the sounds we make when we talk. We use some pairs of letters for special sounds. Like this:

sh... not "s", not "h", but the sound as in "shoe"
th... not "t", not "h", but the sound as in "thumb"
ch... not "c", not "h" but as in "church"
ng is heard on the end of "bang, ring, gong"
also **ph**" may stand in for "f", and "**qu**" for "**kw**"

These pairs are called "consonant digraphs" ("di" means 2: two letters making only one sound) . Now the learner can make some more words using these pairs. Like this:

that this them ship shop shell chip chop

or on the ends of words, like this:

mash cash much rush fish with sing catch

Take some time for the learner to play with all the new words he can make with short vowels, consonants, and consonant digraphs. Maybe make a few sentences? It is also a great idea to let the learner find what words he can read in the newspaper or in any books that are handy.
Does the learner know any songs by heart? He can, with some help, work his way through the printed text of something he knows by heart and thus actually see how the letters are doing their work. For this, use a fescue-pointer, gliding from letter to letter as the learner pronounces the words out loud.

Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top
When the wind blows the cradle will rock.

Lazy Mary, will you get up, will you get up,
Will you get up?
Lazy Mary, will you get up, will you get up today?

This little pig went to market.
This little pig stayed home.
This little pig had roast beef.
This little pig had none.
This little pig cried wee-wee-wee, all the way home.

About that fescue pointer:-- Some children have been scolded for pointing. Some have been required to sit on their hands so they can't point. Pointing helps-- when you're a beginner. When pointing slows the reader down he'll discard the fescue all by himself.

EXERCISE: digraphs.

The alphabet was invented a long time before there was any English language. As various languages have adopted the alphabet, they have made adjustments to suit their special needs. English has needed some letters that aren't in the alphabet and has used pairs of letters as substitutes for the missing sounds: sh...th...ch...wh.

Add one consonant to make a word. Read your results out loud.

ship chi sho whe tha cho shu cha thi

Add one of these digraphs (sh... th... ch...) to each of the following and read your results out loud:

mu ca pa ri di ma ru wi

Another digraph is -ng which never occurs at the beginning of an English word. Put -ng on these and read aloud:

swi ri ba cla ra stro ga bri thi wi

In English "qu-" sounds like "kw-". Read aloud:

quick quit quiz quack quilt

We also sometimes use "ph" instead of "f":

alphabet elephant phonics

EXERCISE: Big Words!

Copy the first word. Sound it out, together, tutor and learner, letter by letter, left-to-right. When the learner recognizes the word, let him copy the next word, and so on

gravity	**hippopotamus**	**arithmetic**	**sandwich**
problem	**rubbish**	**bathtub**	**construct**
happiness	**octopus**	**helicopter**	**rocket**
selfish	**chipmunk**	**kitchen**	

You and the learner can make some more sandwich words using these digraphs, and then it will be possible to make even more sentences, still simple, still dumb, but it takes practice!

The octopus will not fit in the bathtub.
Is gravity a problem with a hippopotamus?
The big box in the kitchen has rubbish in it.
Did the chipmunk construct a nest in the attic.

{That word "construct"-- now there's a challenge! But it is made strictly of elements learned so far. Take it letter-by letter. Be sure to say "Whee!" when the learner figures it out.}

What are you reading now? No, the learner cannot yet read alone. But you can read together. Let the learner read as much as he can figure out, at this point, and the tutor fills in the rest, always pointing as you go. Mostly teachers talk too much.

A happy choice can be to read one of the books from early childhood which the learner practically knows by heart. But now the idea is to watch the words,-- fescue in hand,-- to see how the letters are doing their work. (At this point the learner may actually resent the presence of illustrations and want the pictures covered up!)

For an older learner there are other choices: today's newspaper; a familiar advertisement; a few sentences from some technical material in which the adult has an interest. The learner figures out what he can, so far; the tutor fills in, slowly, always pointing letter-by-letter.

So far, the Exercise pages are all practice with the short vowels only. It may take longer to master these five short vowels than to learn all the rest of the phonics!

Here is a nasty little game to play: Let the tutor point to "tub" and say, "This is `but.'" ten/net pat/tap lap/pal pot/top gum/mug nap/pan. Encourage contradiction. To miscall "was/saw" is to read backwards! Tell the learner we read English from left-to-right, always! Some languages are read in columns, top to bottom. English is read, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. (See the Analphabetic chapter, item 6). When the learner is able, in this game, to grab the fescue and prove that he is Right and his tutor is Wrong! -- the teacher will have taken a big step on the way to the true teacher's goal: to make herself useless.[An older student may be amused to hear that the Greeks and Romans for a time experimented with boustrophedon writing,-- alternating direction, over and back, line by line. They gave that up, long ago.]

Use lots of paper and pencil work on all this.
Want more help thinking up words? See the end of Why Johhny Can't Read (Rudolf Flesch 1955) for lists of words systematicatically arranged by phonic complexity.
Of his 72 pages, the first 23 are all short vowels only. Note: Flesch's later book, Why Johhny STILL Can't Read does not include these lists. But you and the learner can think up your own by just using the alphabet.

PART FIVE: Blends?

Instead of a simple sandwich, some words can be more complicated with extra consonants before and after the vowel. Take these words letter-by-letter from left-to-right, slowly at first, then speeded up till the learner recognizes the word. Sound each letter in its turn. Use a fescue to point to EACH LETTER, left-to-right:

left	next	dump	hand	melt	drum
brush	best	bunch	crack	slam	string

What words can you and the learner make by putting extra consonants into the sandwich words? (These extra consonants are sometimes referred to as making "blends". It is not necessary to learn them separately, as the digraphs must be learned, because the learner can work his way through the "blend", with a pointer, letter by letter, left-to-right.) That fescue, by the way, is not for pointing at words, no! It is for pointing at the Letters, one by one.

EXERCISE: Blends.

Each letter here stands for its own sound. That is, the reader must see and must use every letter, left-to-right. All vowels here are short. Add one consonant to make a word:

slap	sna	spi	sto	plu	sni	dra	spli	twi	sle
spo	gla	clu	stra	fla	flo	pla	spli	ski	fro

Use a fescue - pointer!

The black brush is the best brush.
Let's bang on that big drum.
Dump the dust in the bin.
Grab the string with the left hand.
Tom left lots of mud on the mat.

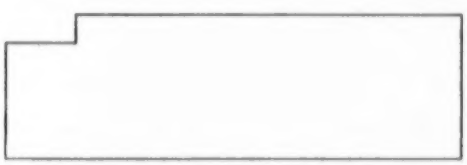
EXERCISE: Letter-by-Letter, Left-to-Right

Read the following pairs out loud. For each pair tell what makes the difference between the two words.

stop	tub	nap	ten	gum	chin	end	saw	bib
spot	but	pan	net	mug	inch	den	was	did

left	just	pin	swell	mud	plum	was	when
felt	jump	nip	smell	mad	lump	saw	then

Instead of, or in addition to the fescue-pointer, we may use a card with the upper left corner notched out to guide the learner into reading a word from left-to-right. Slide this to prevent him from grabbing the final consonant before he has discovered the beginning. With the notched card we expose only the beginning of the word while the learner figures out how it starts, then follows to the middle, letter-by-letter. Often the ending comes easily. Older remedial students often prefer this notched card to the fescue-pointer



The fescue helps the reader read the letters from left-to-right.

What shall we use for a fescue?

broomstraw...knitting needle... crochet hook... nail...sharpened dowel rod... toothpick... artist's "stump" white lead pencil... letter opener.. quill of a feather... ??

Something to read with mostly short vowels only:

Sam fed his ox bugs.
Did that ox get fat?
That ox got thin!
Sad ox! Bad Sam!
Let's get that ox grass.

Og is a rock. He sits in the sun. He just sits. Og can not swim, flip, hop, belch, dig, kiss, stink, limp, or wink. Og can not fuss or kick or fib or yell. Is Og dull? No. Og is a rock. That's that.

Rip and snip. Tip and drip. Let's be disgusting! Tip the milk. Drip the jam. Rip the pants. Snip the mittens. Let's be disgusting! Kick the dentist. Hit the cat. Yell at Grandma. Drop the dustpan. Smash the cup. Step in the mud. Let's be disgusting!

Columbus had no electrical lamps on his ships. His bad arithmetic led him to think that America is India. But he did travel across the Atlantic and back, difficult as that can be with his dinky ships and lack of maps.

A Skunk, a Frog, and a Rat had a club at the fishpond.
"We can drink the pond," commented the Skunk, "but let us shop for sandwiches,-- fish sandwiches, chicken sandwiches, egg sandwiches, with nuts as snacks."
"Not in this club," sang the Frog.
"Get me a bug sandwich."
"That I will not," contended the Rat.
"Get a bug if you can, but if it is in a sandwich, then not a bit of it for me. Get me a bottle of pop."
"That's bad," yelled the Skunk. "He will get hiccups. Get him a mug of milk."
"Not a bit of it," sassed the Rat."
"O well, let's just drink the fishpond," lamented the Skunk, and he got his fish from the pond.
The Frog got himself a big fat bug, but the Rat just sulked.

Short Vowels in Long Words

invent	insist	discuss	dismiss
instruct	misspell	expect	hammock
expand	umbrella	banana	sandwich
benefit	difficult	astonish	arithmetic
electric	octopus	practical	
janitor	president	candidate	
million	chipmunk	panther	suddenly
happiness	grumble	habit	trumpet
hundred	stumble	helmet	himself
kidnap	pumpkin	dragon	thunder
scatter	velvet	travel	basket
timid	rested	patched	smashed
splashed	punish	clever	whisper
chatter	plenty	selfish	suddenly
fender	cricket	hungry	plenty
pilgrim	tumble	absent	pretend
perfect	command	propeller	
telegram	difficult	seventy	cabinet
punishment	activity		

The learner sounds out the word, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. The tutor helps with the fescue, murmurs "yes, that's right, good"-- but tells no words.

bandit cabin rob plan sandbank rock crash steps grab drift visit grand went intend hand expect attract hundred yell several across fast begin began glass medal tub plank windmill stick basket help milk sack mend lift track fix banana trap seven gorilla job connect sap canvas hunt difficult drop flap must wind act had best bump slip comical twist trap bend snap six sniff rip end gulp rush then fish chin chop shell shelf ashes thin thrash chip bunch gift kept lend huff wilt romp dump fist mint match witch smash thick scratch scrub crash cash bench thanks march trumpet desk clip

Heavens no! Do not set the learner the task of reading lists! The above are offered as starters for making somewhat less dumb sentences! It takes lots of practice to get mastery of those short vowels. Do not hurry over this task.

PART SIX: Two Vowels

Some words don't have short vowels. We can use a second vowel to make the vowel "long". The second vowel can push the first vowel into saying its alphabetic name. The second one is just pushing, not speaking for itself. Like this:

toad rain tree paid peach pie

What words can the learner make using ...oa...ai...ee...ea in the middle of a sandwich instead of a short vowel?

At this point you may come up with some words that don't work, like "head" or "bear"; if that happens, don't worry. Tell the learner that some English words do not behave as expected. They make a lot of trouble when it comes to spelling, but for now we are talking about learning how to read. Spelling comes later. What we want to do first is learn to read the 85% of all English words that can be sounded out letter-by-letter. And yes, learning to read this way does actually help with spelling,-- later.

As before, it is now possible to add extra consonants to these long-vowel words, like this:

croak greed paint screech roast

> When Grandma was in first grade, each child had a little box of letters, printed on one-inch squares, to arrange on the desktop, left-to-right, to make words, or even sentences. It was a quiet time, an absorbing game she remembered years afterwards

---

Here are some more Goof-Offs:

said ["sed"]	have ["hav"]	come ["cum"]
where ["wair"]	there ["thair"]	were ["wer"]

EXERCISE: A Two-Vowel Effect.

Sometimes we use two vowels inside a word. The second vowel here makes no sound of its own: it just pushes the first vowel to make it say its alphabetic name. Read aloud.

ee	ea	oa	ie	ay	ai
sweet	scream	soap	tried	way	mail

Can you find some more words to add to each group?

ee ea oa ie ay ai

PART SEVEN: Final Silent e

The second vowel that pushes the first one into saying its name is not always right beside the vowel it pushes. The second vowel can tag on the end of a sandwich word and change both the sound and the meaning, like this:

not..note can..cane tub..tube cut..cute

Let the learner add an "e" to the end of each of these little words and read the results out loud:

bit... hat... tap... rip... hop... mad... dim... at

Yes, rip up the note, but why bite the pen?
That goat stole a tube of paste.
The toad ate the ripe peach.
Jane came late, but Mike got here on time.

A few words have long vowels standing at the end of the word:

he we she be so go no my try why

And then there's always just plain I. (Is this always capitalized because we are conceited?)

EXERCISE: final silent "e".

Add an "e" to the second word in each pair. The first word in the pair will then have a short vowel sound (as in: apple, elephant, igloo, ox, umbrella), but the second word will have a long vowel that says the same sound as its alphabetic name.
Read your results out loud.

at	cap	hat	rob	cut	hop	mad	can	us	hid
ate	cap	hat	rob	cut	hop	mad	can	us	hid

rip	cub	not	bit	tap	tub	dim	plan	scrap	slop
rip	cub	not	bit	tap	tub	dim	plan	scrap	slop

These long vowels are only the second-most-useful form of the vowels. The short vowels are the ones we really use a lot-- in about two-thirds of all English syllables. That is why learning the short vowels first is the quickest way to start.

EXERCISE: Review
Are these vowels long or short? Why?

pot	cute	left	leaf	sob	home	lock	rain	get

oatmeal	green	loaf	stink	grip	life	way	hole	hot

A cute cub came and stole a scrap from the tent.
Did the cub scrape the dish clean?
Did he leave any scraps for me?
O no, but let's not slap the cub.
Let him go free.

Let's drive to the beach.
Or shall we take the bus?
On the beach we can be in the sunshine.
What shall we take for lunch?
If it rains, that will not be fun.
A picnic is better in the sunshine.
Will this be a fine day to swim?

PART EIGHT: The Long Vowel Rule

So far no "rules" have been mentioned. Here comes a rule:

When two vowels go walking together
the first one does the talking, saying its
alphabetic name.
The second vowel serves as a pusher.
This effect will go through one intervening
consonant but not through two:
the second consonant works like
a screen door to block the pusher effect.

There are exceptions. All rules have exceptions. This rule is nevertheless well worth knowing.
Examples:

hop...hopping hope...hoping
cut...cutter cute...cuter

Let the learner tell which of the following are long vowels, which are short, and read them out loud:
sloping..slopping liked..liking..licked holy..holly
dinner..diner supper..super backing..baking

Here are some words to practice on. Let the learner decide whether the vowel is long or short and tell why:

rack	rake	rain	strip	stripe	stick	his	is
this	these	those	them	that	lock	leaf	
wishing		lifted		tiger	music		

Notice how "y" works like a vowel at times: navy tiny

EXERCISE: The Long Vowel Rule.

When two vowels go walking
The first one does the talking.
What does the first one say?
    Its alphabetic name.
What does the second vowel say?
    Maybe nothing.
The second vowel pushes the first vowel to make the first one say its name.

This effect will go through one intervening consonant but not through two.
The second consonant works like a screen door, preventing the second vowel from pushing through.

Read aloud. Explain which are long vowels and which are short--- and Why.

hoping	liked	holly	scraps		
hopping	licked	holy	scrape		
supper	skidding	later	dinner	filling	
super	sliding	ladder	diner	filing	
zero	blotter	cozy	hero	cracker	public
tiny	hammer	shady	tiger	lifted	gravy
music	paint	pant			

[The above is a rough rule, and admittedly it doesn't always work Nevertheless, it works often enough to be well worth knowing.]

And then there are those Three Bears.
Why not Three Bairs?
Well, no, not Three Bares.

Yes, there are always Exceptions. But the children seem to humph themselves over the exceptions with surprising ease. It's the grownups who growl and grumble about the exceptions. That's because the grownups have to Write the books and then they have to be able to Spell.

PART NINE: VOWEL COMBINATIONS

Just as there are consonant digraphs, there are some vowel combinations too. Like this:

"**ar**" can be heard in words like "star...arm...car...part
"**or**" comes in corn...north...short...more
"**aw**" or "**au**" (they sound the same) in auto...awful
"**ow**" or "**ou**" as in owl...out...pouch...clown
"**oo**" may sound in two different ways: moon...good
"**oi**" or "**oy**" as in oil...boy...spoil...enjoy
"**er**", "**ir**", and "**ur**" all sound the same: her first nurse

By this time the learner can read much of English. Do not hurry him, and do not let him guess, even if he makes "good" guesses. This is a time for learning how to read what is on the printed page. It is not the time for speed.

On the other hand, just drilling on words can get mighty dull. A better plan is for the tutor and the learner to read aloud together some stories they both enjoy. Either the tutor or the learner can use the fescue, gliding from left-to-right. If the learner makes a mistake, the tutor can simply hold the fescue at that place, without saying anything, and wait for the learner to look again. The learner needs Quiet in which to think.

~~~~~~~~ from AESOP~~~~~~~~~

A serten man had a goose that laid him a Goelden Egg every day
But the man wonted to get the eggs faster.
So he killed the goose and cut her open.
Inside, he found her just like any other goose.

It does not require any vast number of changes in spelling to produce phonic forms.
~~~~~~~~

EXERCISE: Effects of "r"

What words can you find that belong in these groups?

ar	or	er	ir	ur
far	corn	her	first	nurse
start	porch	spider	shirt	fur

In the following put in either "ar" or "or" into the spaces and read your results out loud.

	park			short
sp k	d k	m k	ac rn	h se
h n	h m	f m	c k	st m
th n	b n	b n	sp kle	m ch
co ner		s t	st	sh p

EXERCISE: Vowel Combinations

There are not enough vowels in the alphabet for the English language.Therefore we make some more by combining letters, just as we made consonant digraphs. What words can you find that belong in these groups?

au-aw		ou-ow		oi-oy		ew	oo-oo	
haul	awful	snout	owl	spoil	joy	chew	pool	foot

Sometimes "w" acts as if it were a pusher-vowel, like this:
grow low throw yellow snow

Sometimes we find a group of letters that can be read two ways, like this:
bow... bend over or bow... for tying shoe laces
In this case, the reader tries first one and then the other possibility, and selects the sound that make sense in the sentence. Happily, words do not normally come in lists!

~~~~~~AESOP~~~~~

A rabbit jeered at a turtle for being so sloe.
But the turtle laffed and sed, "Let's hav a rase.!"
"Cum on then," sed the rabbit.
"Yoo shall see."Thay started at wunse.
The turtle plodded along at a steddy rate.
The rabbit treated the hoel matter as a joke and lay down for a nap.
He considered that it wood be eazy to katch up.
Turtle plodded on.
When rabbit woke up and ran, he found the turtle waiting for him at the goal
~~~~~~

PART TEN: "C" and "G"

The letter "c" is used for two different sounds, one like "s", the other like "k". Here's the rule (the only other rule we will use; the rest are really only spelling rules): If the next letter after "c" is an "e", an "i", or a "y", then the "c" will sound like "s"; otherwise like "k". So:

cat....cent....city....cop....cut....cycle

The letter "g" behaves in similar fashion but not with the same regularity:

gas...get...gelatin...give...magic...got...gum...gym

How can you tell which it will be? Well, since real reading is not just lists of words, there's the rest of the sentence for help Try first one way, then the other. See which one makes sense

EXERCISE: "c"

The letter "c" signals the same sound as "k" most of the time. But if the next letter after the "c" is an "e", an "i", or a "y", then the letter "c" switches over to the sound of "s".Read aloud:

cat	can	crib	Notice both "c"'s!
cent	kettle	crack	bicycle
city	kite	cluck	success
cop	cone	central	accident
cut	cub	credit	cyclone
face	fact	receive	recycle

On a recent occasion a certain Public Official was reading a speech to the local citizens. This is what he read: "The people of our great State want us to secede." The word on his prompter was "succeed". Neither the word "secede" nor "succeed" is a phonic Goof Off, but that speaker sure goofed on his phonics!

EXERCISE: "g"

The letter "g" can behave in similar fashion, but for the "g" the rule doesn't always work:

"g" as in goat	"g" like a "j"
gave	gentle
get	magic
got	engine
gum	gym

For the following words, try first one way and then the other and listen: what makes sense?

gift	hug	rag	leg	egg	log
page	huge	rage	ledge	edge	logic

PART ELEVEN: ti-, ci, si

These can stand in for sh- as in nation,, special, permission.

PART TWELVE: Silent Letters and Other Spooks

The most important thing to know about those Silent Letters is that there are some. Once upon a time long ago people really did pronounce some of these ghost letters. Just for fun, trying saying what you see:

knife	knock	knee	knuckle	wrap	wreck	wrong	dumb
comb	doubt	guess	plague	build	bread	heavy	

As one young learner said: "You only make that mistake once!"

Sometimes letters switch places: field thief

And then there's that leftover from the past-- "gh"-- which was once a throaty grunt and now doesn't know what to do with itself:

cough laugh enough high
light though through thought.

It takes a bit of flexibility to read English, a survivor's ability to roll with the punches. So: In HOW we began with the 85% of English which is reasonably spelled. We saved these irregularities till last for a good reason. None of them is 100% silly. And by the time you've come this far, you have all the advantages of reading them in a context in which these rascals occur. When you know how phonics works, they're not so bad.

Exceptions! Exceptions! Yes, there are Exceptions.
English is worse than Italian, worse than Spanish,
worse than Russian. But it's not all bad.
About 85% of all English words can be read using what we have discussed. And for the last 15%? Well, they are not so bad either. There is no word that is all wrong. Every word has at least some phonic clues. Take the word "once",--one of the worst. It ought to be "wunce" or something like that. But even in its queeer spelling it is not without some hints to prevent us from reading "sometimes" or "perhaps". Real reading is not done with lists of words. Real reading has a context, a story, some ideas going on. If a story begins "once upon a time", it's easy enough to read "upon a time"; those words are in the 85%. So what might that first word be? The other words, plus the letteers o-n-c-e clue us in.

Yes, there are Exceptions, always.
But in 85% of English, phonics works.

Next? Off to the library to borrow the best books we can find. Read them aloud to your children, sure. But also! let the children read them aloud to you! Short list to start on--

Peter Rabbit by Beatrice Potter
Story of Ferdinand by Munroe Leaf
Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
Story about Ping by Marjorie Flack
Cinderella by Hilary Knight
Make Way for Ducklings by Robert McCloskey
Little Red Hen and other Little Golden Books
Mother Goose

Some Strategies

1. Whereas in a one-to-one situation the tutor and learner sit side-by-side, sharing one book and a fescue, in the classroom a teacher can use the blackboard to achieve some of this effect. The children can write at their desks in imitation of the blackboard. The teacher's hand can become the fescue.

2. In the beginning, writing must always have preceded reading, else there'd be nothing to read. As soon as the learner can identify a handful of consonants and the five short vowels, set him to the task of building words with what he knows, with paper and pencil, or with letter-cards assembled into three-letter sandwich words, or on a blackboard, -- always pronouncing out loud, however softly, the word he has built.

3. Mostly we teachers talk too much. Use the fescue-pointer and Wait! Silence gives the learner time to think.

4. Resist interruption. The problem-- at first-- is to decipher the alphabetic code, to pronounce the words. Do not allow the learner to chat about yesterday or tomorrow. Conversation is not reading. Learning to read is hard work. The child-beginner expects to work at it. It is possible to prolong the session after the reading hour for friendly conversation, but during the phonics session there is just one goal: learning HOW to read the words on the page. Many a child has come home from his first day at school crying: he had expected to start to learn to read that very first day. He need not be disappointed; he can learn to read something on Day One.

5. As soon as possible really read something. You can begin to make some dumb sentences by combining the words the learner has made. Our ancestors began by "reading" the Lord's Prayer-- which they already knew by heart. As the tutor's fescue glided over the lines, letter-by-letter, the learner could recite the words, seeing the letters do their work. In this respect the teacher today is in two kinds of trouble: a) the risk of using religious material; b) the fact that English pronunciation has undergone some big changes since the printers decided how to spell the Lord's Prayer! There need be no despair. The learner may well know some Mother Goose rhymes that can be used instead. Or even a TV commercial!

6. Each lesson, even the first, can end pleasantly with a bit of poetry. At first this may be four short lines, easily memorized. The tutor reads the poem first, using the fescue. Immediately the learner is invited to join in for a second reading, then a third, then a fourth-- in unison. This is smooth reading at the tutor's pace with no pauses for explanations, as the learner tries to keep up. After several readings there can be a pause to examine any words that the learner may not understand. Then the learner reads the verse with as little help as possible, again, again, trying to make music of the poetry. The classroom teacher can use a large chart for a bit of poetry. The thoughtful tutor may well provide a copy of the poem for the learner to take home and read to his family, to display his success.

7. What shall we read? Lists of words, no! This smacks of flashcards, workbooks, and testing. Testing is NOT teaching, no! Testing is much easier than teaching, but what have you got after you get a test score? The old folk tales, Little Red Hen, Three Bears, are a useful place to begin, even for an adult illiterate who may wish he could read to his own children! Let the learner figure out as much as he can, help him as little as possible.

8. Each lesson may begin with a swift review of all the phonic elements the learner knows, so far. This warming-up exercise need take little time. A chart of all the phonic elements, in plain sight at all times, will be a real help to the learner. Sometimes he will consult such a chart on his own. Sometimes the tutor can point to an element instead of telling the learner what he is not remembering.

9. Reading matter which resembles normal conversation will be easier for the learner than quaint language. This does not, however, suggest that we offer "easy" books, no! The learner has to work very hard to learn how to read. What he is to read should be worth that effort-- the words of famous writers, the literature that has found place of honor in human memory. Originals, not "written down". There will never be time in a lifetime to read all the good books there are. The learner's effort deserves the best we can offer.

10. Re-reading, three, four times, the same selection is a valuable tool. Choral reading lets even the slow participate. A class group can memorize, together, a bit of poetry, then use the fescue to match the printed text as they chant the poem they have learned. And then take home a copy.

Three Stages in Learning to Read

According to Charles Fries [Linguistics and Reading, 1963], there are three stages in learning to read. In the first stage the child learns to decode from the alphabet to words, sounding out the letters, from left-to-right. This is the inverse of writing: when we write we put down letters to represent sounds, letter-by-letter, left-to-right. There is no other way to write in English. This book is the HOW of that first stage.

In the second stage the child passes from conscious decoding to automatic decoding. That is, he becomes so familiar with the way the alphabet works that he can do it subconsciously. He catches on to whole words and phrases at a glance. As he reaches stage two he can add the "suprasegmental" elements, things not printed in the text, such as "tone of voice", expression, emphasis, appropriate pauses. As he reads orally he can hear himself, and then he may re-read a sentence with improved expression. The skilled adult reader does this too, silently, when he goes over a sentence he has misinterpreted.

In the third stage the child enters into imaginative realization of the story he is reading. At this point he is skilled at decoding and interpretation of sentence structures. Now, he pictures the scene in his mind, enjoys the adventure, gets to know the characters. This is genuine "reading for meaning". This is the goal of reading. But if we shortchange the child on steps one and two, he may never reach stage three.

Someone has described a mechanical reader as a Zipperhead: as if he opened his skull, dumped in the raw text, and never processed it. The genuine reader is a Bookworm-- a live creature who eats, digests, and grows. The Bookworm decodes the text, takes in the meanings and implications, and can then combine the new material with his past experience. The Zipperhead dumps everything into memory and regurgitates on demand. The Bookworm lives,-- changed by his reading experience.

It is hard work. Children expect to work at school. Some have come home crying because they did not begin to learn to read on the First Day of school. Learning can begin on Day One with Step One. Decoding need not be unpleasant. And isn't it really an insult to the child if we insist that everything be easy, easy, easy?.

Where Did You Come from, Baby Dear?
Out of Nowhere into Here.

That is one version. What George Macdonald actually wrote was:

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the Everywhere into the Here."

The child who has not been read to, at home, enters school as one coming from nowhere. He knows nothing of the world outside his personal circumstances. To his confusion this may include lots of television, half understood. His vocabulary is limited to the language of everyday talk. His sentence structures are simple, often fragmentary. His ability to sit still and listen has not been developed. He has a hard time at school. He is disadvantaged.

Teachers tell us that it is easy to spot the child who has been read to at home. He is well ahead of the rest. He has a larger vocabulary. He understands and uses more complicated sentence patterns . He has met in books all sorts of characters and incidents, both real and fairy tale. He knows how it feels to hear a story from beginning to end without interruption. Whatever his birthday, he is more mature than others . And he learns more readily how to read for himself.

However-- just because he has begun to read for himself, this is no sign we should stop reading to him. He still needs to be read aloud to,-- to increase his vocabulary, to hear the more complicated sentence patterns of great literature, to get acquainted with History and Geography and Science and Poetry and all the rest of that Everywhere from which every human being has come. The more the better! The adults who love him can read aloud to him the great books he is not yet ready to read by himself. One of the Anthologies of children's literature can be a start, but better yet is to read the whole books by our best authors-- Stevenson, Kipling, Pyle, E.B.White, T.H.White, Lawson, Kenneth Grahame, Konigsberg, Rumer Godden, Grimm, Canfield,-- once you start on a list like this, a children's librarian can help find more.

"Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the Everywhere into the Here."

Book Worm List

Wonderful World of Mathematics by Lancelot Hogben [Garden City Books]
Great Adventures that Changed the World by Peter Lacey, editor [Readers' Digest Association]
Story of Mankind by Hendrick VanLoon [Newberry medal book]
Child's History of the World by Virgil Hillyer [Appleton-Century-Crofts]
A History of Everyday Things in England.. in 5 volumes.. by Marjorie and CHB Quennell [Putnam]
Cathedral; Castle .. both by David Macaulay [Houghton Mifflin]
Visits in Other Lands by Atwood and Thomas [Ginn]
Just So Stories by Rudyard Kipling
Ben and Me; Mr. Revere and I.. both by Robert Lawson
Understood Betsy by Dorothy Canfield [Henry Holt]
Downright Dencey by Caroline Snedecker [Doubleday]
Master Skylark by John Bennett

This list is strictly limited to books that are wet, juicy,-- that is, not dry,-- some of them to make us laugh.

Real information for the science minded:

Edward G. Huey: What Makes the Wheels Go Round
Herbert Zim: What's Inside of Animals and other titles
Hugh Ruchlis: Orbit
Wilfred Bronson: Wonderful World of Ants + other titles.
Irma Webber: Bits that Grow Big
Alice Dickson: First Book of Prehistoric Animals
Flanagan: Window into an Egg
L. and A. Hornblow: Fish Do the Strangest Things
George F. Mason: Animal Tools
Elsa Jane Werner: The Golden Geography
Langston Hughes: First Book of Rhythms
Holling C. Holling: PAddle-to-the-Sea
Eric Sloane: ABC Book of Early Americana

Stories:

Kenneth Grahame: Reluctant Dragon
Roger Lancelyn Green: Robin Hood
Alice Geer Kelsey: Once the Hodja
Robert O'Brian: Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
Elizabeth Coatsworth: Jock's Island
E.L.Konigsburg: Jennifer, Hecate, Macbeth, William McKinley, and Me, Elizabeth; From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
T.H.White: The Sword in the Stone
Elizabeth Coatsworth: The Cat Who Went to Heaven
Rumer Godden: The Kitchen Madonna; Mouse House
Dinah Maria Mulock: The Little Lame Prince
Thornton Burgess: Old Mother West Wind series
Richard an Florence Atwater: Mr. Popper's Penguins
P. L. Travers: Mary Poppins
Frances Hodgson Burnett: The Secret Garden
Louisa Alcott: Little Men
Dorothy Canfield: Understood Betsy
Thornton Burgess: Mother West Wind Stories

and lots more....

There is a problem. The child who has mastered phonics may find himself in a schoolroom where the text books are limited to the controlled vocabulary of basal word-method readers. Even his school books in history and science will have been "vocabularized" (dumbed down)to match look-say. Famous authors have been hired to write Easy Books using that small word list. This limits what the young reader can learn! Easy Reading is a shabby way to get an education. Our young reader needs a library of his own, either on the bookshelves at home or through use of his library card. He needs now to read the great books of children's literature, the Newbery Medal books and honor books, the famous books of the past, the folklore of long ago, some lively history books, a modern science magazine. Good books. Great books.

The educated men and women of tomorrow are children reading great books-- today. Who will put those books into the child's hands?

SPECIAL PROBLEMS

AUTOMATICITY – *Help for the "Word Caller"*

THE ANALPHABETIC –*Sometimes called "dyslexic" or "learning disabled" or "remedial" case.*

THE CORPUS CALLOSUM – *Time runs out.*

Automaticity: A Special Time

"He knows phonics, but he doesn't comprehend what he reads."
"My child just reads on and on in a monotone, without even stopping for the periods. I can't stand it!"
"She wants to read the same book, over and over again!""

These are seven-year-olds. They are in what Montessori calls one of their "sensitive periods"-- meaning that they are at a stage of growth where certain activities just come naturally. Age Seven likes repetition. He likes to practice. He doesn't deal well with interruptions. So?

The mastery of phonics **needs** practice-- repetition to the point of mastery. When this is achieved, the child has attained "automaticity", meaning that he finally knows phonics so well that it has sunk below his conscious level, where he no longer needs to pay attention to the phonics; he is ready to enjoy the story.

Three rules:

1. Don't interrupt him during his practicing by asking questions about the meaning, trying to discover if he understands. He is not trying to understand. He is trying to master the decoding skill.

2. Make sure that the child has been taught all the elements of basic phonics decoding before he reaches this built-in time of willingness to practice. Sure, he will sound like a "word caller," for a while. Give him room to work his way through his needs.

3. Provide generous opportunities for him to read aloud to you- but also, do read aloud to him: he still needs this. You can take turns reading with him. Encourage him to read to his younger brother, to his grandmother, or even to his teddy bear.

There is a charming name for the child at this stage: he is an Abecedarian. He will outgrow it.

The Analphabetic

Some special notes are in order for teaching a person to read who has already failed.

He is already embarrassed: do not test him. Teach him.
He is discouraged. Encourage him.
He is in a hurry. Slow him down.

He does not know why he has failed. Let us tell him. He may have accepted the pseudo-medical label "dyslexic." Let us give him his proper term: he is analphabetic. He has been put through a system which has failed, over and again for 50 years now and become a national scandal,-- not the fault of the children. Furthermore, often the ones who have failed to learn by look-say have had unusually logical minds (like Einstein and Edison). They want to know **WHY**. Phonics shows why. These students are often good at math and science.

He is scared, lonely, afraid. He has been hurt, shamed, ridiculed, put down as a dummy. Let us strike the word "no" out of our vocabulary. If he misses a word we will say nothing, just hold the fescue-pointer at the place and wait for him to figure it out. He will if we teach him faithfully. We will teach him the basic phonics, as outlined in HOW. But let there be no misunderstanding-- basic phonics for a beginner and for a remedial student have some wide differences in the problems and opportunities confronted.

1. Item. The remedial reader is not a beginner. His first problem is shame, embarrassment. For years he has accepted the label "dumbbell". He has learned all sorts of tricks for concealing his inability to read. On the other hand, his arrival at college can be testimony to his terrific ears: he has learned how to learn by listening to an extent that may well astound us. Yet the process of mastering the how-to of reading may well be a painful task for him and for his teacher, loaded with errors, discouragements, confusion, back-tracking,-- and slow. Whatever we can do to build self-confidence will help.

2. Item. For the beginner, if he is five or six years old, just starting school there is excitement and anticipation. For the remedial reader there is instead intense embarrassment. Fear. He has failed. Here is potential another failure.

3. Item. For the beginner there is the regular school day, tax-supported. For the remedial student there is loss of time from his regular classwork, or perhaps from his job, while he gets tutored, at no small costs.

4. Item. For the beginner there are no old habits to break. All the words are new words. For the remedial student there are old habits of guessing-from-context so that, in his haste to read, he reads what is not there. As he reads aloud to you, you will become aware that, although he has learned to read some big words, he is missing an appalling number of "little" words:

for..from was..saw they..then ever..very to..it on..no

There are old habits of pairs of words once learned together, now confused, so that he reads "up" for "down", "before" instead of "after,-- easy, everyday words, but this upsets the meaning of a passage scandalously! This is not evidence of medical dyslexia (a problem that exists in less that 1% of the population). It is a consequence of early effort to learn words as chunks instead of as letter-sequences. To help him takes patience. It is a bitter task for the remedial reader, to break old habits and try to learn new ones, particularly when the words he misses so often appear to be nothing but "little words". But somewhere in his brain, in the attempt to memorize words instead of sounding them out, he has stored a whole bunch of short-circuits, and he calls out the wrong one of a pair that he has stored together. To help him takes patience. It is very difficult to do. It can take weeks and weeks, even with a patient and loving mentor at hand.

5. Item. The beginner is happy to use a fescue-pointer to guide his eye, to feel out small differences, to notice each letter in its turn, from left-to=right. Unless someone makes fun of him or scolds him, the beginner will use a fescue-point until he reads so well that pointing only slows him down, at which time he will discard it without noticing that he has done so. The remedial reader is ashamed to use a pointer. He has been ridiculed for pointing. It is babyish to point. And so he bumbles on, mixing up "familiar" and "family", "indecent" and "incident", "conversation" and "conservation". What does he make of these curious errors? Does he scold himself once more for failing to understand? Does he suppose the writer to be weird? Is this one more way he proves to himself that he really is a dumbbell? Or does he conclude that reading is nonsense?

6. Item. The child is taught to read left-to-right. Words on the page. Letters in the word. Many and many a remedial reader has never been told that the letters in the word are sounded out from left-to-right. I have dealt with remedial readers -- in college!-- who looked up in surprise on hearing this information,-- and sometimes soon thereafter made surprising progress in reading!

7. Item. The beginner, learning phonics, is closer to what Montessori calls a "sensitive period" for language learning. The ear is sharp. The brain is ready. The eighteen-year-old needs our patience. But this is not to say that he can be less than accurate. Those five short vowels he must master!

8. Item. The beginner loves to read out loud. Since this is the way of learning phonics, he has a clear advantage. The remedial reader has been scorned when he tried to read aloud. Now he is embarrassed and ashamed to read aloud, though this would help him greatly in mastering phonics.

9. Item. And then, for the beginner, there is that wonderful Age Seven ahead, when a normal seven-year-old delights to read anything and everything, just for the fun of practising his new skill. By age eight this phase has passed. For the remedial reader by the time he is diagnosed, tested, assigned, and prescribed for, his age seven is past. He has to do the dull work of practising without the inborn urge for it. He may never become the reader he might have become if he had

a) learned phonics first
b) used a pointer, left-to-right
c) read aloud when still young
d) not suffered from early failure

Our remedial reader has experienced Reading-Post-Readiness. And it hurts.

What we can offer him is patience in a one-to-one situation,-- one teacher, one learner, only one book between them so that both can use the fescue on the letters as they go.

If we have a tape recorder, we can use it to record the learner as he reads aloud, then replay and let him see his own mistakes for himself. We can find professional recordings of good stories (Boris Karloff reading some of the Just So stories is grand!) and let the learner follow the text with fescue, then reread the story himself.

And there is one more thing we can offer-- praise. The remedial reader has had a bellyful of failure, no, no, no. Therefore, to the remedial reader we say Yes! yes! good! You got it! Right! Yes! yes! yes! And when he is wrong. Silence. Just hold the fescue and wait for the next chance to say Yes! Tell him when he is right by saying Yes! as often possible. If we scold him or say no, that doesn't tell the learner how to please us. We can hold the fescue and let him think. But we will have to pay close attention so that we can tell the learner when he is right. Murmur Yes, shout Yes, nod and smile Yes, reward and reinforce all the correct things the learner does.

Encourage. That means, put the heart into it.

Below are recorded samples of remedial students attempting to read a story. These illustrate how missing the "little words" destroys the meaning. As one observer put it: "The reader doesn't trust books to make sense."

Samples:

Recorded from the reading of a junior high school boy. He was reading for his tutor from a version of Robinson Crusoe. He had successfully read big words such as "spyglass, merchant vessel, aroused, evidently, desperate". He is stumbling over "little words", but observe what happens to the meaning:

"For eight days Crusoe and Friday waited...His master went up and the hill, but what his saw was not a in...Crusoe felt as happy as thought he were a boy again...The bound men were dragged out of the boat as some as it landed...Perhaps he might yet do so that his man Friday's help...Crusoe said to the man who seemed to eldest, can we help? There had both them here to let them starve. Yes, is captain answered. A new were killed and the rest tried up in a cave. Here are two men warm are think you can count on. We seven show contentedly be enough for the ten of coming."

A man, age 22, a high school graduate,
Reading for his tutor from Jock's Island:

"Next morning Jock felt struggling than he had felt for some time. His first tell was to make sure that he ram was indeed...In the..of frog and wind and are one.., he met have been mistaken."

A boy, age 11, reading for his tutor from Mrs. Frisby:

"The sharp had cold began in December...She grew that both of these felt free to themselves...They were stored enough to carry ears of corn...Any kids of surprise was a race treat...I was captured with my ear companions...You can see what the floor was solid rock. Probably of certain before there was a farmhouse at the place...He read very book he took find."

Why would anyone even want to read if this is the kind of nonsense that comes out of books?

Time Runs Out:
The Corpus Callosum

The left half of the brain is the language half. The right half is the picture half. The crossover connector between the halves is called the "corpus callosum". This corpus callosum develops gradually from before birth up to age 8 or 9. By age 9 it has developed some settled patterns for how to learn to read.

If a child is taught to read by phonics first, this work is done in the left brain to match spoken language. If a child is taught to read by a whole-word approach, this is done in the right brain, where each word is stored as if it were a picture. The unabridged dictionary contains nearly half a million words. Nobody uses that many. But the ordinary child easily uses 5,000 of them. Five thousand is a lot of pictures to hunt through to find the one you want, specially when the differences may be as small as, say, shirt/skirt. The child who has learned to read by basic phonics has had to deal with only 44 units, recombined endlessly to make up all the words there are.

Problem: At about age 9 that corpus callosum gets "set in its ways". It has learned, through practice, to handle print with either the right side of the brain or the left. Thereafter it becomes very, very difficult to change what the corpus callosum will do. We can produce sociogenic dyslexia by teaching the beginner to read by the whole-word method, trying to use the right brain for a job that belongs to that language expert, the left brain. Can an adult learn to read? Maybe,-- if he has never tried to read with his right brain.

Time Runs Out!

HOW: a bibliography

The following books tell how and why to use phonics as the beginning of learning how to read:

Hunter Diack: In Spite of the Alphabet
(Chatto & Windus, London, 1965)
History and comparisons of methods of teaching reading.

Charles C. Walcutt,ed.: Tomorrow's Illiterates (Little Brown and Co 1961) Experiences of tutors with remedial cases.

E.M.Standing: Maria Montessori, her Life and Work (Mentor-Omego, 1962, pages 47-50)How four-and five-year-olds "exploded into reading".

Charles C. Fries: Linguistics and Reading
(Holt, Rinehart and Wimston, 1962) The three stages in learning how to read.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld: "Who Killed Excellence?" in Imprimis, September,1985 (Hillsdale College,Hillsdale,Mich.)
History of how the trouble in teaching reading began.

Rudolf Flesch: Why Johnny Can't Read,1955, & Why Johnny Still Can't Read,1981, (Harper & Row)

Alfred C. Moorehouse: Triumph of the Alphabet (Schuman, 1953)
History of alphabetic writing.

Andrew Tuer: History of the Horn-Book (Benjamin Bloom, 1897, 1968)
Hornbook and fescue as museum interests.

Hearing of the U. S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Literacy, 20 March, 1986, Serial #99-91 (U.S. Government Printing Office)
Technical information about the corpus callosoum, together with research experience on the efficiency of methods of teaching reading.

William Bennett: What Works and First Lessons, (U.S. Dept. of Education, 1986) Advice for parents and schools for improvement.

Richard L. Gregory: The Oxford Companion to the Mind (Oxford University Press, 1987) Information about corpus callosum.

BASIC PHONICS

J.C. Daniels and Hunter Diack: The Royal Road Readers,
Teachers' Book plus children's readers (Chatto & Windus. London)
Basic Phonics readers with stories.

Mary C. Hletko & Charles E. Wingo: The New Reading with Phonics, Teacher's Edition (J.B. Lippincott Co., 1978)
Phonics exercises in workbooks.

Charles C. Walcutt & Glen McCracken: Lippincott Basic Reading Teacher's Edition Books A & B (Harper & Row, 1981)
Basic reading series phonically organized, illustrated for children.

William McGuffey: McGuffey's Eclectic Primer, and also First Reader (American Book Co., 1837, 1920)
Primer that moves through phonics fast, with stories.

Florence Akin: Word Mastery including "Suggestions to Teachers" page 110 (Houghton Mifflin Co. 1913, 1941)
Lists of words phonically classified and indexed as a handbook.

Lucille D. Schoolfield and Josephine B.Timberlake: The Phonovisual Method (Phonovisual Products, Rockville,Md.)
Instructions with desk/wallcharts of consonants and vowels arranged for a child's use.

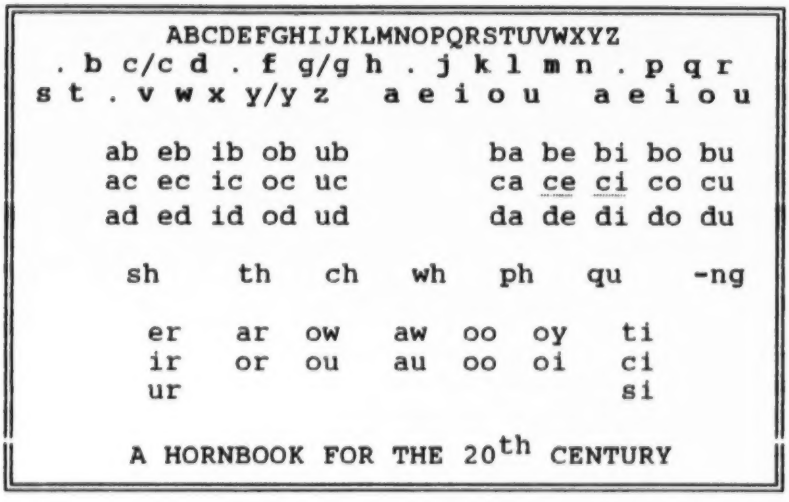
Romalda Bishop Spalding: The Writing Road to Reading
(Whiteside and Wm. Morrow Co., 1962) Phonics and spelling combined.

Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence Barnhart: Let's Read
(Wayne State University Press, 1961)
Many pages of words and sentences phonically graded, with index.

Let not the reader be put off by any lack of recency in the above list. Those who say "we do teach phonics" and those who say "no one method is best" have been overloooking something. How to teach reading as described in the above books is very old. The Phoenicians did it first.

The Opposition: William S. Gray; Arthur Gates; E.A. Betts; E.W.Dolch; Glenn J. Doman; Paul Witty; Paul McKee; Nila B.Smith; Kenneth Goodman; National Education Association; International Reading Association; many teacher-training programs.

This HOW instruction book will work. But it is Work. Nothing happens from merely owning the book. Lessons that are short and come often work best. It is reasonable to plan for at least ten weeks for a beginner; up to two years for a remedial case after age 9.


ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
. b c/c d . f g/g h . j k l m n . p q r
s t . v w x y/y z a e i o u a e i o u
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ad ed id od ud da de di do du
sh th ch wh ph qu -ng
er ar ow aw oo oy ti
ir or ou au oo oi ci
ur si
A HORNBOOK FOR THE 20th CENTURY

1. Sound out the letters in the word from left-to-right.
   Use a fescue-pointer for this.

2 The vowel is short unless something makes it long.
  When two vowels go walking together,
  the second vowel serves as a pusher to make the first vowel say
  its alphabetic name.
This effect will go through one intervening consonant,
but not through two: the second consonant works like a screen door
to block the pusher effect. (There are exceptions, of course.)

paid toad hoped hopped

3. The letter C sounds like K most of the time, but if the next letter after the C is an E, an I, or a Y, the C switches to an S sound.

cat cent city cot cup cycle

The letter G can behave in similar fashion, but the rule doesn't always hold for G. Try out both to see which makes sense.

4. Many other rules are spelling rules. Phonics for reading uses but few rules.

HOW

A Handbook for Teaching Someone to Read
Based on the Fifteenth Century Hornbook and Fescue

Contents:

How the fifteenth century hornbook worked
Literacy today: what went wrong?
HOW: Systematic phonics-- from letter sounds to poetry
Explanations and exercises for home or classroom
Special problems:
Automaticity and the word caller
The Analphabetic who is not dyslexic
The Corpus Callosum: time runs out.
Bibliography

For additional copies or more information write to:
Raspberry Hill
1929 N. Drake Road
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
or phone (616) 343-2312